

UC Berkeley

IURD Reprint Series

Title

Changing Roles of Urban Planning From Pleasure Garden to Open Space

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/6cf8x62s>

Author

Cranz, Galen

Publication Date

1978-07-01

Peer reviewed

GALEN CRANZ



Changing Roles of Urban Parks
From Pleasure Garden to Open Space

Institute of Urban & Regional Development
University of California, Berkeley

Reprint No. 176

Reprinted from: *LANDSCAPE* Volume 22, Number 3,
Summer 1978, pages 9-18.

The Institute of Urban and Regional Development serves the faculty and students of the Berkeley Campus conducting research into a wide array of policy-relevant questions. Its foci of inquiry are the processes of urban and regional growth and decline, the consequences that alternative styles of governance have for patterns of development, and the scientific bases for development policy and for policy planning.

Toward these ends, current research is directed to the economics of urbanization in the West and in the Third World; techniques of environmental management; effects of using new energy sources; emergent patterns of suburbanization and central area reconstruction; evaluation of alternative modes of transportation; design of effective means for supplying social services; contemporary issues in housing policy; determinants of urban livability and the factors shaping urban life; and potential improvements in methods of analysis, evaluation, and planning.

The Institute's members are drawn from departments throughout the Berkeley Campus, and their research findings are published in their respective professional journals and in commercially distributed books. The Institute prints and distributes many of their research papers; a catalog of publications is available on request.

CHANGING ROLES OF URBAN PARKS

FROM PLEASURE GARDEN TO OPEN SPACE

Galen Cranz

FOUR distinct constellations of program and form have emerged since the beginning of the American park movement in the middle of the nineteenth century—the pleasure garden, reform park, recreational facility, and open-space system. Designers of each model have manipulated similar elements—water, trees, flowers, circulation paths, borders, sculpture, and architecture—but in varying combinations and with different emphasis in order to advance specific social goals. Promoters and beneficiaries have changed as historic conditions have given rise to different rationales for creating and maintaining parks. Activities and physical forms have been revamped to keep pace with new definitions of appropriate behavior and emerging attitudes toward the city.

The four models were derived from a systematic analysis of stated ideals for park use and physical form. The wide range of variables taken into account has yielded a new typology, although park professionals will recognize the constituent elements.

All four models share one major dynamic: each grew out of an effort to solve urban problems arising from the twin processes of industrialization and urbanization. Thus, all are deliberate mechanisms of social control. Examples of each can still be seen in many cities, although the forms from newer ideologies often have been superimposed on older park types.

Pleasure garden, 1850–1900

By 1840 urbanization and industrialization had begun to change American life. The spread of cities prohibited daily travel to the countryside. The pace of factory production meant that time-off, leisure, and contemplation no longer were intertwined with work. Transcendentalist reformers were agitating for large, open, green places in order to get people into natural settings that offered relief from the rigors of work. More radical solutions could have been championed, but within the context of capitalism this proposal had appeal. The major impetus behind the decision to set aside public land was the ever-present threat of epidemics, especially cholera that swept New York City every summer and most severely in 1852.

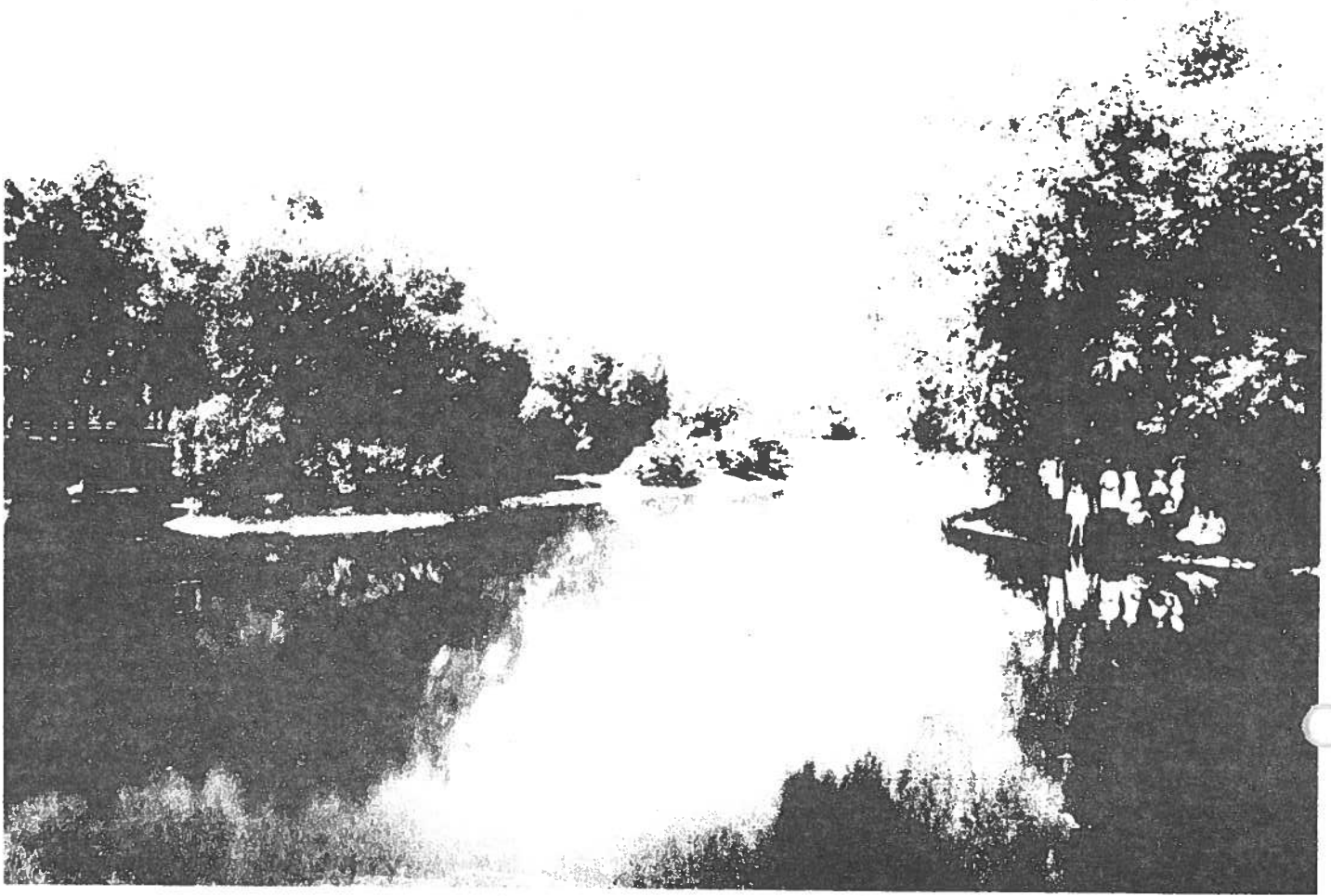
The germ theory of disease was not yet accepted, but people observed that epidemics were worse in congested areas. Reformers lauded parks as the “lungs of the city” and suggested that open spaces might serve as an antidote to cholera and the severe losses that the city incurred every summer as thousands died and the middle class fled to the countryside. A desperate City Council, also worried by the Port of New York’s two-week quarantine that was threatening to send shippers to competing ports, responded.

The pleasure garden was a vast landscape of alternating trees and meadows, undulating hills, slowly meandering waterways, and broad reflecting ponds—an idealized

agrarian scene, orderly but without the fussy decorations of architecture, sculpture, or flower beds, where sedate family and church groups could stroll, picnic, listen to concerts, go boating. Pleasure grounds were always at the edge of the city where land was cheaper, but the peripheral location also was regarded as an appropriate way to gain distance from city life. The grounds covered thousands of acres; designers argued that being able to see beyond the boundary of the park into another landscape would shatter the bucolic illusion.

Frederick Law Olmsted’s belief that the greatest counterpoint to urban form was pure wilderness was tempered by his recognition of the impracticality of achieving the illusion of wilderness anywhere near a city. Consequently, he chose the pastoral landscape as the most pragmatic and appropriate way to provide relief from the city. He manipulated masses of trees to create settings for picturesque elements—occasional reminders of the awesomeness of wilderness. In order to emphasize the kinesthetic experience of moving through spatial sequences, he arranged woods to open and close around meadows, beckoning strollers forward through narrow passages that suggested the possibility of something interesting on the other side. He did not want them diverted by an intellectual interest in any one tree or in the trees as species, so he repeated types to avoid calling attention to their small-scale characteristics. Grass defined meadows, softened the whole environment, and bound various areas, so that meadow seemed related to meadow and beckoned pedestrians onward. Large flat sheets of water suggested the placidness of the pastoral landscape rather than the tumult of a mountain stream. From certain vantage points these flat expanses would merge with the sky, creating an experience of infinity that markedly contrasted with the finiteness of the urban grid. Olmsted disapproved of flowers in parks except under two circumstances: one species planted in large naturalistic bands or in decorative gardens confined to narrow bands around buildings and formal plots closely associated with them. He felt that flowers revealed the hand of man, which the park visitor saw all too much of in the city from which, presumably, he had just escaped.

Buildings were kept to a minimum in the pleasure garden. Pergolas and bandstands were light, airy structures with peaked or latticelike roofs, usually without walls. Pavilions, museums, or other special exhibit places that required walls compensated for the intrusion by their unusual shapes and associations with exotic places. For a short time the parks departments required a rustic style with buildings, railings, bridges, pergolas, and pavilions made from small trees with the bark intact. This style soon gave way to a Romanesque tradition where the sloping roof, asymmetrical organization, staggered stonework, and round turrets provided the desired contrast to commercial



Lake in Jackson Park, Chicago, late 1880s. The pastoral ideal of the pleasure garden is clear: trees, water, and a meandering shoreline provide the setting for children at play, fishermen, nature lovers, and boaters. Courtesy, Chicago Historical Society.

buildings. This ideal, too, was undermined eventually by the neo-classical revival after 1880, which contradicted the original informality of the pleasure garden. Sculpture, like buildings, was also restricted. Not only did it show the presence of civilization; it also was associated with European aristocratic formal gardens, a democratic anathema. Ethnic groups especially, often wanted to commemorate a hero by donating a sculpture to a park, and the struggle to keep statuary out is another interesting example of the difference between ideology and practice.

Circulation paths were probably one of the most distinctive elements of the pleasure garden. Because city streets were straight and laid at right angles, park carriage ways and footpaths were curved. Olmsted separated vehicular from pedestrian traffic so that a toddler, a pair of lovers, or picnickers could use the park without paying attention to traffic. This separation of pedestrians and vehicles was an innovation that became a part of urban planning. But

the solution probably survived because of its efficiency, not for any underlying concern for orchestrating a pastoral experience.

The gas lighting of the middle nineteenth century was restricted to open meadows to avoid killing trees. Olmsted, who did not want lighting fixtures dotting the park reminding people of city streets and manufactured products, approved of this constraint.

Each element of the pleasure garden tradition emphasized the primary rationale underlying the design: people were supposed to experience a pastoral landscape that would take them out of the normal cause-and-effect, finite, scheduled life in a utilitarian, hard-surfaced, busy urban center. Several activities served this primary goal. Meadows accommodated picnicking families and church groups; some games were tolerated because they contributed to the overall picturesque effect by displaying men and boys in pastoral poses. Rowing on ponds and lagoons offered a

pleasing contrast to urban routines. The open meadows, sequestered rambles, and other footpaths were laid out for strolling. Designers assumed that people would watch other pedestrians as well as carriages and horses that the wealthier users drove to and through the park. Benches encouraged people to stop and look at others on parade as did embankments of lawns at road junctions or major entrances into the park.

Concerts, except for German oompah music, were allowed as being appropriately uplifting. Although somewhat educational, listening to concerts required no participation so it could not be confused with work and production. Many large pleasure grounds provided a place for military assembly where the audience could view military drills as a form of display, again without changing the passive and contemplative experience.

Parks also were justified as a wedge for introducing culture. Any kind of education that did not require repetition, memorization, and copying at desks in classroomlike formation was acceptable. This rationale opened the door for museums and exhibit halls. Conservatories displaying exotic plant material typically were one of the first buildings allowed into a park. These translucent structures of exotic form and their exhibits reinforced a theme basic to parks themselves—vegetation.

Park promoters also claimed that parks provided the factory worker a much needed chance to exercise. Religious objections to sport eased after the Civil War, and by the 1880s popular sports like tennis and bicycle riding were considered appropriate park activities. Any form of activity that did not exercise “the large muscle groups” was forbidden; crafts were viewed as evil because of their similarity to factory production.

Designers created settings for group activities in response to two social concerns. As in many industrializing cultures, the stresses growing out of change often coincided with high rates of alcoholism and prostitution. In mid-nineteenth century America, the family was perceived as

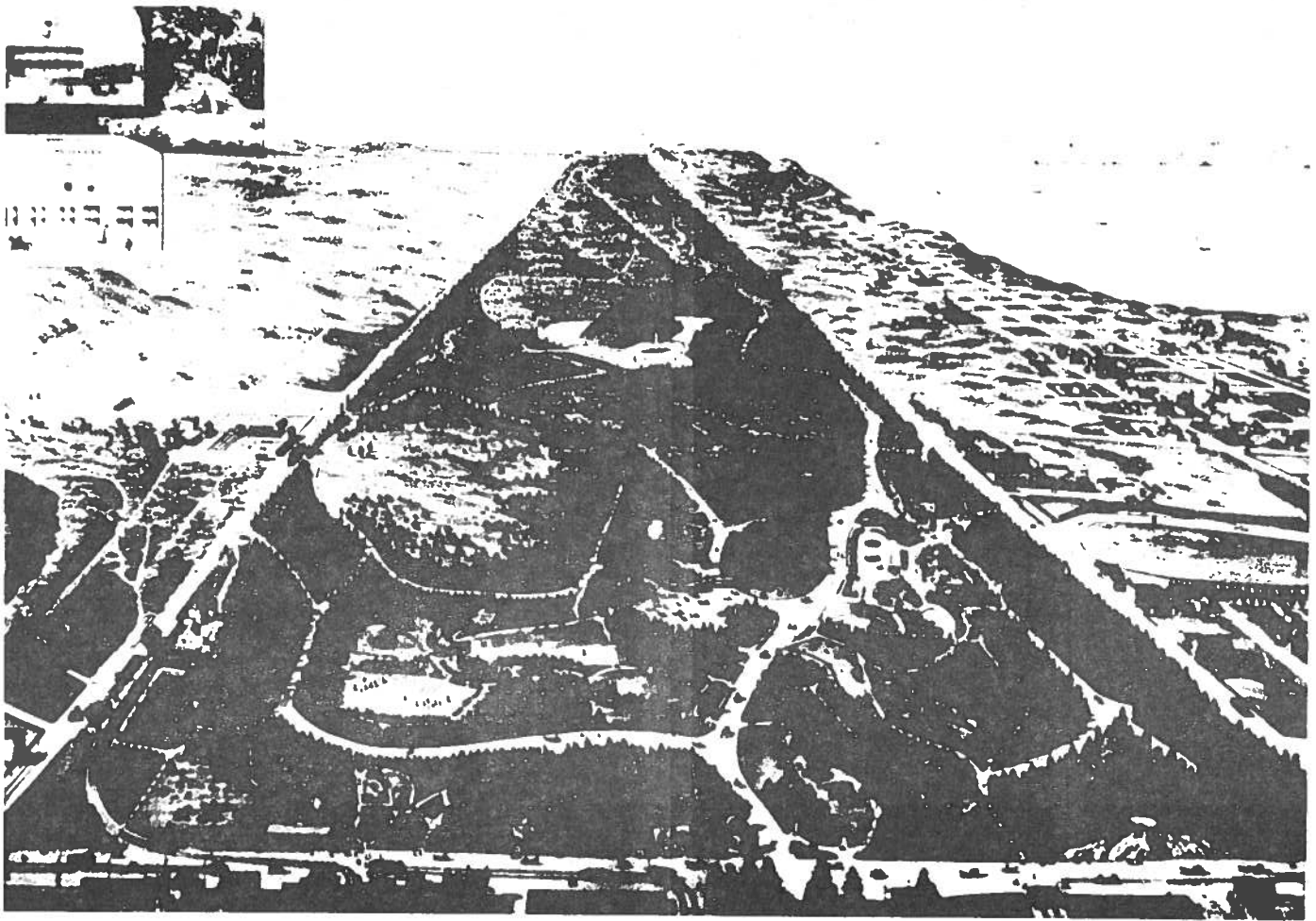
threatened by both. Park promoters hoped to reinforce the family by providing a setting for family activities. These same men also were concerned that democracy not be destroyed by urbanization and industrialization. Class differences that had existed in rural communities became more obvious when workers and owners lived in separate districts and never socialized. The pleasure ground provided a setting in which all social classes could interact, if only visually. Most activities could be pursued by anyone; even those that required money (like having a carriage or being able to rent one) allowed face-to-face contact and a kind of visual interaction. Despite the democratic intent of this model, however, its appeal was upper-middle class, because the designers believed that everyone aspired to that way of life.

Reformers and planners not only promoted sanctioned behavior, but also discouraged inappropriate deportment. Various proscriptions against alcohol, raucous music, dancing, and gambling added up to an effort to exclude aspects of popular culture associated with the immigrants and their crowded slums. Gambling had to be eliminated because of its immigrantlike acknowledgement of the importance of fate. Sensual music and food were forbidden, although they provided a clear-cut contrast to urban and industrial experience. This apparent inconsistency is understandable; ultimately parks are mechanisms of social control. Park promoters hoped to create a shared civic culture by getting users to internalize and carry Anglo-Saxon rules and behavior back to the streets. No policy maker would solve one problem while exacerbating what he perceived as another. The antidote to urban deficiencies should not lead to a raucous and debauched experience; rather it should release and refine users’ energies so that life back in the city would be more bearable and—possibly—improved.

The social program involved in the pleasure garden model is analogous to the difference between right and left hemisphere activities of the human brain. Olmsted wanted



Golden Gate Park, San Francisco, 1906. Tents shelter victims of the city's earthquake and fire disaster. The vast open grounds of the pleasure garden also have been sites for troop housing in both World Wars, and during the 1968 poor people's march on Washington, D.C., demonstrators constructed “Resurrection City” in the expansive parks of the nation's capital. Courtesy, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.



Bird's-eye view of Golden Gate Park, San Francisco, 1892. Footpaths and carriage ways in the pleasure garden were curved to contrast with the angular city layout. Courtesy, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

park users to exercise the right hemisphere's powers for perception of space, volume, kinesthetic sequence, water, sound, and music. Thus, the design program was not simply to give *respite* to the tired worker, but to *stimulate* and exercise an unused part of the human mind. This is a modern, positive way of looking at the pleasure garden and the sense in which it was an antidote to the city. A more cynical view would postulate that pleasure grounds were an antidote to a necessary evil devised by moral elites who saw the city as outside their limited moral ideals. They owned businesses there, but would have preferred to live in the countryside as gentlemen farmers. In contrast, some rural migrants idealized the city for the entertainment it provided, its bright lights, its sense of importance, the freedom it offered from semi-feudal relationships in agrarian communities, and, most of all, its wages. To them the city was probably not a necessary evil, but a golden opportunity. What might parks have looked like had they been designed to express these hopes and attractions to the city?

Reform park, 1900–30

The most enduring legacy of the "reform park" is the playground; users often referred to this model as the "playground" as opposed to the "pleasure ground." That label underemphasizes the model's connections with the larger reform movement of the Progressive Era and the motives that generated the playground, field house, and utilitarian landscape style. Since the 1880s, reformers had been agitating for the construction of children's playgrounds. By 1900, Progressives interested in neighborhood reform argued that recreational needs should be met daily at nearby sites, rather than on occasional outings to the city's outskirts. The two ideas—the need for playgrounds and the need for local parks—came together around 1900 and gave rise to the reform park. By 1903 new legislation enabled Chicago to buy the first land for an inner-city park. The shift from the pleasure garden to playground marked the sharpest change in American park history.

The typical neighborhood park was a square block or

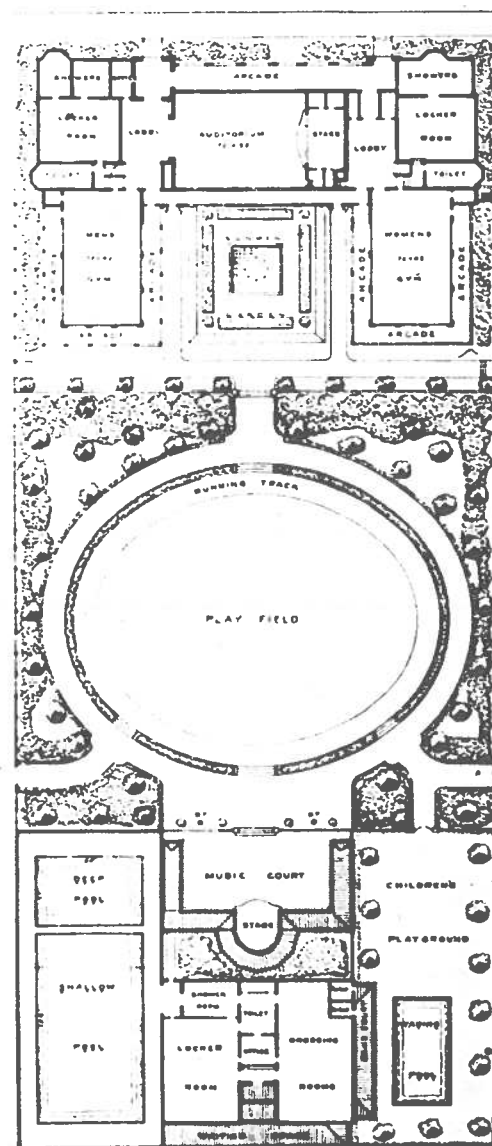
two surrounded by tenements and factories. Except for a transition park (for example, McKinley Park in Chicago), paths in the reform park were straight and at right angles to one another and the city grid. This intermediate type sometimes used berms to block the view of city traffic from inside the park, but in most the siting was frank and straightforward. Park structures looked exactly like the adjacent rectangular factories, apartment houses, and commercial buildings. A new building type emerged, the field house that incorporated showers, community rooms, meeting rooms, and a gymnasium. Architecturally conventional and symmetrical, the brick-faced structure had no turrets, picturesque roof, or swooping porches. Playgrounds and men's and women's playing fields flanked the building in rectangular plots of sand and blacktop. Outdoor gymnasias consisted of slides and swings, typically separate sets for boys and girls. A sandbox with bench was included for mothers and their tots. Trees and flowers served to outline the perimeter and field house. Flowers were no longer forbidden because they suggested the hand of man; the only constraint on their use was space. Grass was squeezed out by sand, blacktop, and buildings. Water created no pastoral illusion; rather it filled wading and swimming pools. Commemorative sculpture was rare because the reform park was not so much an emblem of civic pride as a convenient place for exercise, play, and other forms of relatively direct problem-solving. Changes in lighting technology coupled with a new attitude towards park use also brought a radical departure from the pleasure ground model: most reform parks were completely lighted for night use.

Professional play leaders organized and supervised activities. No longer were families expected to amuse themselves as a group. Each age and sex was assumed to have special needs, impossible to meet in integrated groups. The activities were heavily, although not exclusively, child oriented. Small children simply played in the sand under supervision. Older boys and girls performed gymnastics and organized sports, again under the care of an adult play leader. Young adults could use playing fields after work, and adolescents and young adults were catered to when the parks softened their historic ban on social dancing. Immigrants were served through Americanization and naturalization classes. One argument also claimed that foreigners would be best assimilated by meeting one another while escorting their children to park activities.

Crafts were welcomed into the lexicon of acceptable activities shortly after World War I. Park officials argued that too many people were scared off from parks by having to show physical prowess. Administrators hoped to attract minority children living in ethnic enclaves, physically handicapped persons, and inordinately shy persons by including arts and crafts.

Plays and pageants were the only concession to fine arts. Botanical exhibits, paintings, and archeological findings were not deemed appropriate for the working class, but the color and sensationalism of pageants and drama were considered appealing to the tastes and sensibilities of the laboring class and their children.

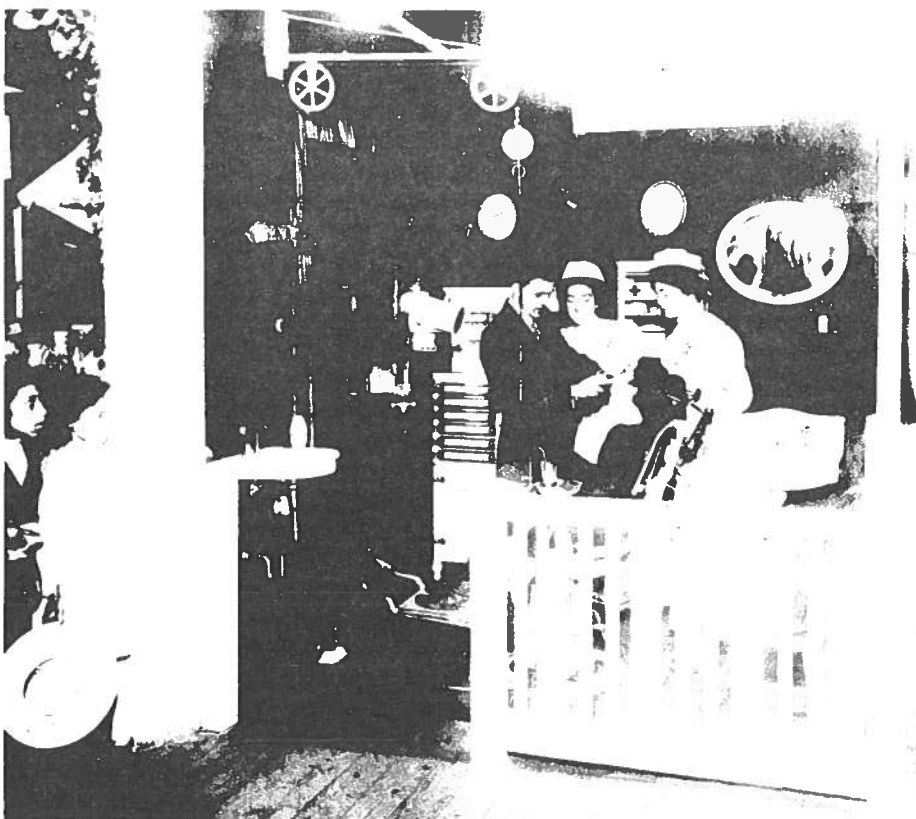
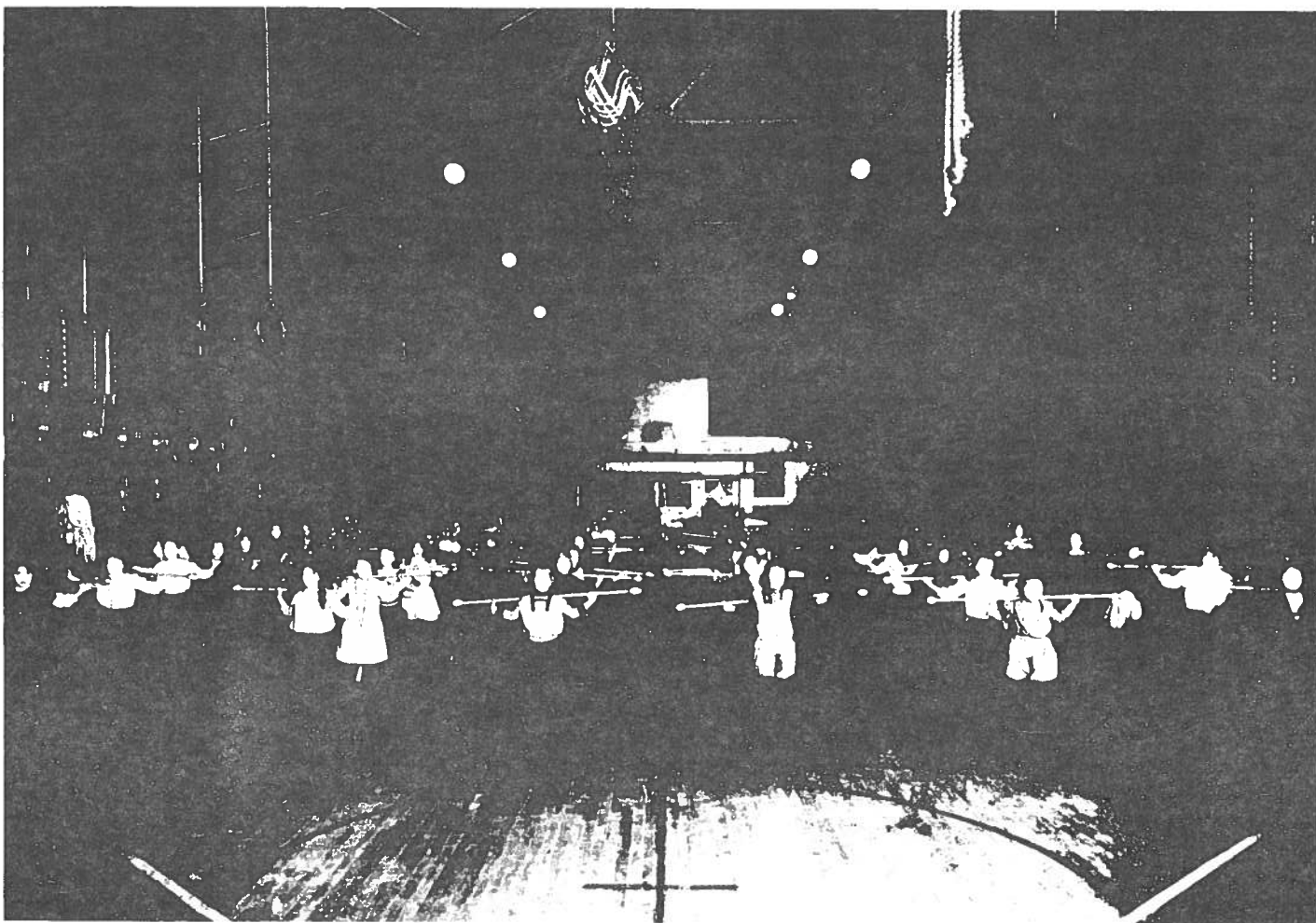
Public health concerns motivated some park offerings. Few tenement apartments had shower baths, let alone private ones, for each unit. Swimming was provided primarily



Pulaski Park, Chicago, circa 1915, shows the straightforward, rectangular layout of the reform park.

for public health reasons and secondarily for recreation. As the wealth and easy credit of the 1920s was transformed into bathrooms within homes and apartments, the importance of field-house showers declined. Swimming, however, steadily increased in popularity as a recreational activity.

A split between the recreation movement and the park movement originated in this era. Some cities like San Francisco had separate commissions—one for parks and another for recreation. Park commissioners often were businessmen and philanthropists, while recreation commissioners frequently were social workers and reformers. Parks stood for large-scale capital improvement and construction, while recreation came to stand for social welfare and personnel budgets. Parks came to stand for landscape appreciation, and recreation for active participation. The conflict between active and passive recreation that continues to this



Above, girls' gym class, Seward Park, Chicago, circa 1915. Activities in the reform park were structured in order to get maximum use of recreational facilities. The psychic value of "meandering" was judged secondary to putting large numbers of children through exercise programs. The Model School Dental Clinic, at left, was set up in a park field house in Chicago to demonstrate dental hygiene and possible careers to working-class families. Two black children look on at the left, but park services were distinctly oriented to whites, whether native or foreign-born. Courtesy, Chicago Historical Society.

clay began in the early 1900s, and the genesis of each point of view lies in different social movements.

The reform park was oriented toward the needs of the working class as perceived by business, philanthropic, and professional elites. Its location in the tenement districts, the stress on physical exercise, supervision, and organization and the relative absence of fine arts indicates an acceptance of industrial culture and an effort to rationalize it. The underlying assumption was that the city could be reformed. This ideology may have been useful precisely because elites feared that the city could not be reformed. Machine politics was the reality; an order was being forged, but not the Anglo-Saxon detached and dispassionate rule of law. What would the reform park have looked like if it had been based on an ideology that condoned the reality of personal favoritism? Would it have been more of a clubhouse, such as the beer gardens, turnvereins, ceme-teries, and churches that ethnic groups were organizing then? What would a pattern of club membership have done to the character of recreation and open space in this country?

Recreational facility, 1930-65

The reform model underwent some evolution after World War I and during the group social work movement of the 1920s. But it reads as whole cloth up to the 1930s when park administrators abandoned idealistic efforts to use parks as a mechanism of social reform. The reform period clearly terminates in New York City with the appointment in 1930 of Robert Moses as park commissioner. Moses's first annual report stated that "We make no absurd claims as to the superior importance and value of the particular service we are called on to render." Parks no longer had to justify their existence as accomplishing needed social change. Recreation was accepted as a municipal function, an established institution, rather than a zealous reform movement. The frequent use of the term "recreation" came to stand for the importance of serving all age groups, not just children in the playgrounds. National recreational journals also acknowledge an important break between the playground park and the emerging recreational facility.

The term "facility" was appropriate because new construction was not necessarily a building. Sometimes it was a stadium, band shell, gigantic swimming pool with bleachers, or a checkerboard and tables. Although these various facilities were additions to parks, they were not unique to them. No new building type was developed for parks; in fact, the most commonly built form was simply a replica of the field house. Landscaping received less attention than ever before.

Active recreation was the password of this era. For children, supervised play continued to be important; for adults such field sports as baseball, football, and basketball gained legitimacy. Swimming pools were more popular than any other single facility. Big sports events at the stadia and ball fields attracted massive numbers. Crafts continued to appeal to those not interested in or able to participate in active sports. In the 1950s this trend blossomed into a concern for the physically handicapped and the elderly. Fragrant gardens were designed for the blind,

ramped gardens created for the wheelchair bound, and special programs organized for retired persons.

These activities and their physical forms evolved from a complex social context. During the national crises of the Depression and the Second World War, parks served the nation by sustaining morale. Programs kept people busy and public works sponsored by the federal government during the Depression offered a tangible symbol of progress. Women's role in wartime production stimulated a short-lived experiment with day care. But three trends—professionalization, standardization, and suburbanization—had an even greater impact on park evolution. After the 1920s a social class emerged in America, sometimes called the "new class," composed of "white-collar workers." Social analysts were not sure whether a person in this group would identify with the owners of the means of production or with employees. Time has shown that persons in upper-management, salaried positions perform as if they share the interest of the owners. They seldom see themselves simply as workers because they wield decision-making power. The emergence of this clerical and managerial class is linked to the increase in professionalization in this period. The existence of the new "middle" class allowed people to believe that they did not have to ally themselves with one side or the other in a clear-cut class conflict. By emphasizing their professionalism they could appear to be outside the simple division between owners and laborers. In park literature all reference to class issues was abandoned; discussions of efficient management and "service to community" were substituted.

Standardization of organizational structure, park design, and programming also proceeded rapidly in this era. Efficiency became the byword. Recreation departments that had been separate entities consolidated. In order to save money, playground plans were duplicated without regard to differences in topography and the needs of local users. Gymnastic equipment, picnic tables, fencing, band shells, bleachers, and even field houses were ordered in multiples.

Suburbanization provided the rationale for extending parks into new areas, and it also contributed to the banality of the recreation facility. Suburbs (here referred to as tracts of low-density, single-family dwellings on the city periphery, not the geographically distinct garden city) represent one of several solutions to the conflict between urban and rural life. The pleasure ground solution offered an antidote to living in the city. The reform solution attempted to improve the quality of the city itself. Suburbs represented the decision to work in the city, but live on its periphery, thereby expressing and accepting the split between urban and rural lifestyles. This dichotomous thinking enabled urban-park policy makers to focus on active recreation and large-scale "facilities." Their assumption may have been that suburbanites had greenery and small intimate open spaces in their yards and needed large-scale facilities for field sports and basketball. Meanwhile, city dwellers were pressing for recreation areas close to home. Although their needs were different, both groups were given the same bland park design. The urban park served the most explicit and direct needs of the population without regard for a more subtle need to stimulate other parts of the psyche. It became a single-purpose, highly utilitarian

outlet for biological and social needs. The resulting banality of urban parks from this era has dulled our ability to think of them as potentially significant mechanisms for reform or as potentially interesting, amusing, engaging, stimulating, or exciting.

From 1930 to 1965 planners operated as if the city were a system and city planning a problem of system management. Parks were viewed as one of many elements essential to an overall balance, along with schools, hospitals, transit systems, housing, shopping centers, and industrial sectors. But not all people shared this conviction. In fact, the city was becoming a collection of competing bureaucracies. Because new agencies were being created in response to the Depression and war, and because of the tendency towards professionalization, overlapping jurisdictions were inevitable. If this reality had been elevated to an ideal, how might park policy have responded? Instead of defining parks as a technical requirement for a well-balanced neighborhood, planners might have had to compete more on the merits of each park proposal. Fewer parks might have made it through the barrage of critical groups competing for funds, but each might have had a more distinct character geared to the needs of a particular group.

Open space, 1965 and after

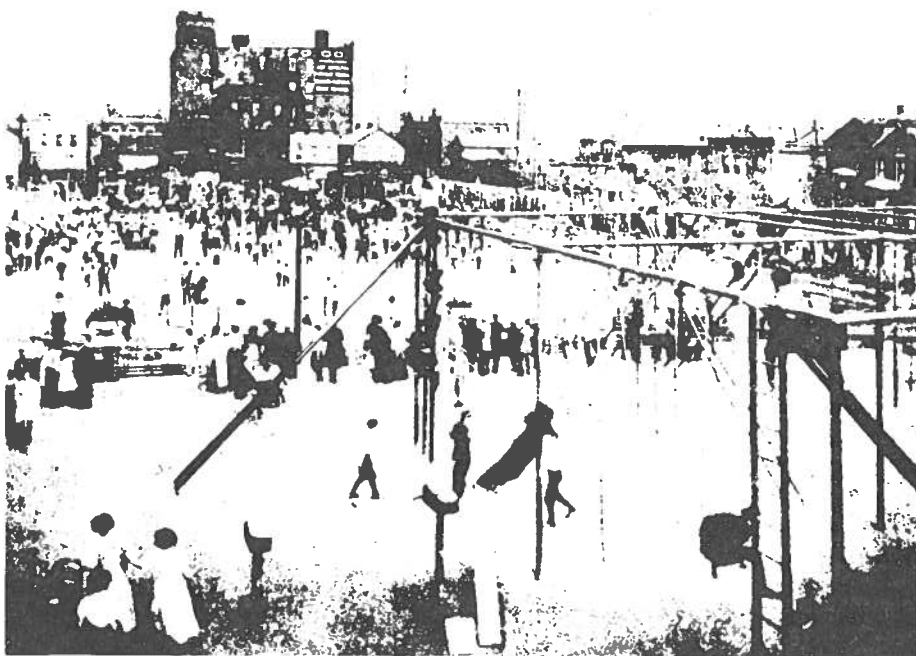
The idea of a park as a recreation facility held sway from 1930 until 1965, when John Lindsay issued a paper on parks during the New York mayoral campaign. His proposals touched on an issue ripe for political exploitation. For the first time since pleasure garden days, outside architects and prominent designers were hired to plan parks as well as much smaller lots and plazas. "Open space" became the term for these disparate bits of land. Some feeling about the importance of parks—strictly defined—diminished while ideas about the significance of open and green space gathered strength from the new concept that parks,

streets, plazas, and empty lots were parts of a continuous system. Citizens and professionals viewed all unbuilt space as potential sources of psychic relief.

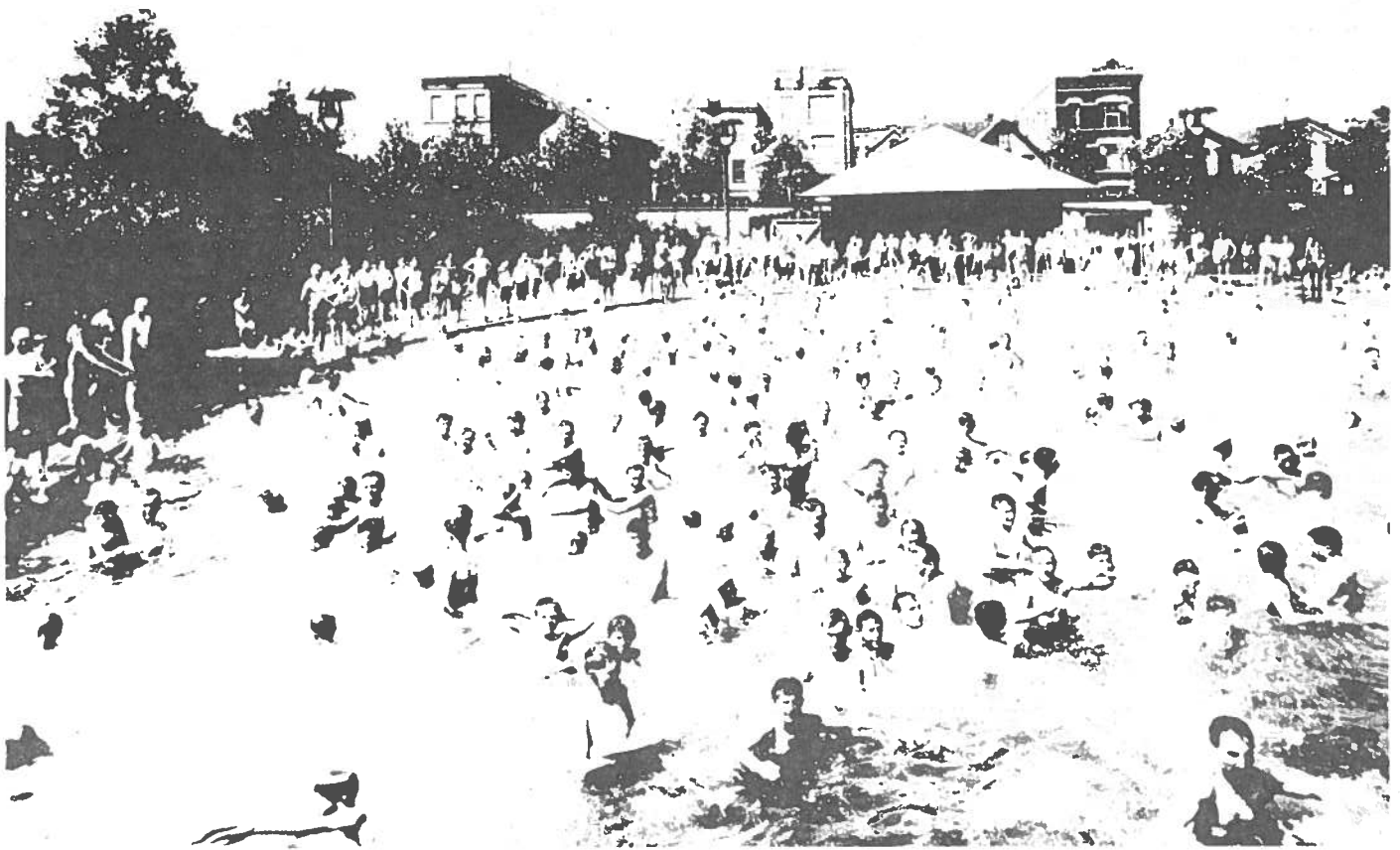
The new park type perhaps is characterized best by the adventure playground popularized in England in the 1960s by Lady Allen of Hurtwood. Conventional gymnastic equipment—swings, slides, teeter-totters, climbers—was abandoned in favor of free-form environments and play equipment. Designers like Paul Freeberg and Richard Dattner adapted this concept to New York City. Railway ties and 12 by 12 timbers in different lengths formed a module for many play structures; cement culverts were another popular material. Unlike English playgrounds, the American version did not offer the opportunity to build, learn, grow, raise animals, destroy, or create. Only the forms' virtues were many; they had few movable parts, were extremely sturdy, and neither easily vandalized nor costly to maintain. The tot lot was another version of this same form, often done in an extremely small space and in an abstract style with an emphasis on sand for small children and benches for the parents.

Paley Park in New York City is perhaps the prototype of an adult park that grew out of a new sensibility toward open space. Tucked between two buildings, the site has a sheet of falling water at the back to muffle traffic sounds. Although formally arranged with rows of trees and walls on three sides and paved with cobblestones, this little oasis is meant to offer the same kind of psychic relief that Olmsted thought required two thousand acres and vast meadows.

These three park types—the tot lot, the adventure playground, and the urban plaza—use small lots previously thought unusable either because of their size, shape, grade, or proximity to busy streets and incompatible land uses. The open-space philosophy viewed every bit of land as a



Stanford Park, Chicago, circa 1915.



Swimming pool, Eckhart Park, Chicago, circa 1915. Sanitation, not recreation, was the primary motivation for pools in the reform park.

potentially valuable gem in a network of open spaces. Tot lots and adventure playgrounds were justified on the basis that play should be free-form, and therefore, so should the equipment that facilitates play. Pleasant rest spots for women shopping downtown and for clerks and business people on lunch breaks were intended to help keep the central business district attractive at a time when corporations were flocking to the suburbs. Rock music and the large band shells and stadia required to stage it were given priority because of the widespread effort to popularize park concerts and revitalize park programming. Swimming pools were well patronized and considered effective in calming down adolescents and "keeping the city cool." New York City is proud of having diverted major urban riots during the summer of 1968 when other cities were wracked by disorder and protest. Portable props were appropriate for the "happenings" of the late '60s—part drama, participatory performance, and artistic or musical event. Many people could gather for this kind of celebration and their needs be met without permanently changing the landscape. Modern sculpture was installed as part of an effort to expand and respond to an increasingly rich popular culture. Street furniture received more attention once sidewalks were defined as a vital part of the open-space system, and the city itself was defined as an art form. At the beginning of this period, art exhibits helped to give a new perspective to urban realities. Street lights, semaphores, pavement markings, manhole covers, traffic flow,

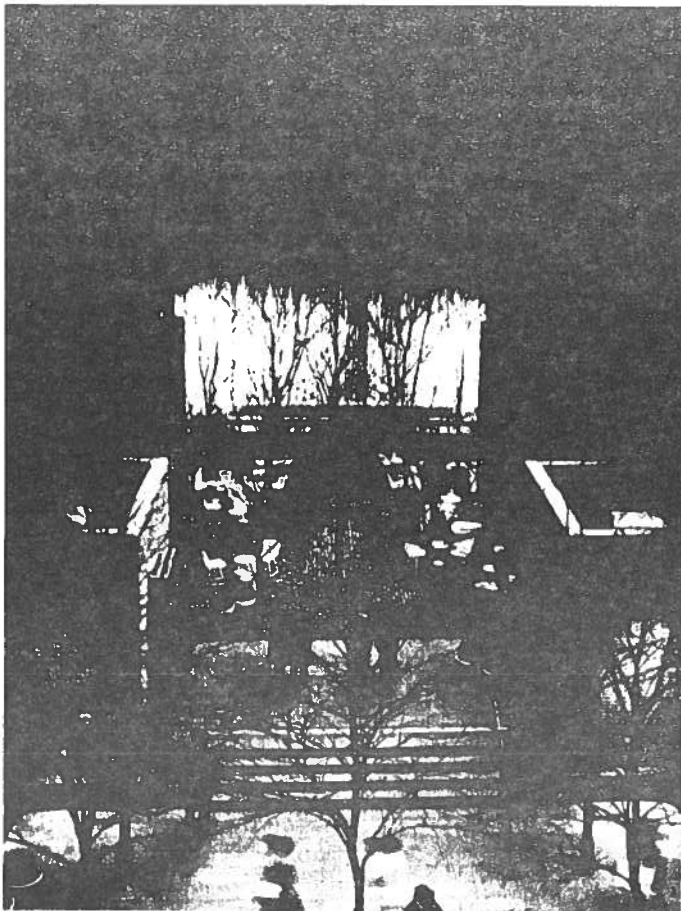
reflections in windows, contrast between images, juxtaposition of old and new, rich and poor, native and foreign all could be seen as artistic phenomena. The city became valued for its potential for heightening experience, for its ambiguities, and for its sudden coalescence of form into spots of order, unity, and wholeness.

Larger social forces influenced open-space policies. Two were anticipated in park literature of the 1950s: automation and increasing leisure. Automation had a potential for increasing the amount of leisure, but more importantly it changed the character of work. Division of labor kept any one person from experiencing the whole work process, and automation removed him one step further from direct production. Recreation came to be viewed as important as an arena in which participants could pursue a full cycle of activities.

Increasing leisure had consequences independent of automation. Always concerned with social control, park officials wanted people to be able to fill their time "properly." Perhaps for this reason planners from the recreation era, like those from the pleasure garden, emphasized wholesome recreation at the expense of popular culture. By the middle 1960s parks were the fuddy-duddys of recreation, offering bingo games for entertainment, cut off from rock and roll, participatory art, and all the appreciations and sensibilities central to the counter culture. This laggardly response to the dual phenomena of automation and increasing leisure may be behind the sudden revitalization of

park programming. Since nothing really innovative had been done in parks, they were a promising area for a political candidate, such as John Lindsay, wanting to demonstrate that he could make changes.

The underlying ideology of the open space system is that the city is an art form worth saving. This new attitude toward the city and its open space occurred precisely when the inner city was perceived as decaying. The apparent contradiction disappears if we recall that the social and physical consequences of massive urban destruction and renewal were judged disastrous, and so a new tack was taken—selective revitalization. But many suburbanites and those forced by poverty to live in slums felt that the city was still ugly. High-income persons found recreation in elegant, casual living around pools in the suburbs. Rioters did not act as though they felt the urban fabric worth saving; it already had been wrecked and vandalized by urban renewal, narrow municipal boundaries, and a tax structure that enabled the suburbs to seem independent of the city center. How many parks might we have if one sprang up every time a building was destroyed, whether by riot or fiat? If we had the money to spend on parks that we spend on highways and defense, would the city's beauty lie only in perceptual gymnastics or in prosaic and apparent harmony and lushness?



Paley Park, New York, a "vest pocket" park on 53rd Street in midtown Manhattan. Courtesy, New York Public Library.

Contemporary parks

The most important lesson in park history is that form always reflects immediate social goals, an ideology about order, and an underlying attitude toward the city. Park history can be divided into identifiable periods of thirty to fifty years, each with a discernible beginning, middle, and end. But no model has died out. Rather, each new one has emerged alongside earlier models so that at any given point in time we can find examples of several types. Playgrounds, for instance, were tucked into pleasure grounds, usually at the perimeters. This stratification or layering of models has obscured the evidence that each model evolved in different periods for different purposes and different populations. A consequent temptation is to take an eclectic view of park purpose and design that results in a hodgepodge of elements from each model—hillocks, play equipment, ball courts, and kinetic sculpture. Because no one is sure what parks are for and whom they should serve, park planners favor a scattershot approach in the hope of covering most bases. A closer look at our own era and a realistic analysis of our social problems and attitudes toward cities might crystalize park policies based on contemporary needs. Our needs are not entirely different from those defined in the mid-nineteenth century; some, like the need to stimulate different parts of the psyche, will continue. But the way we handle class relationships, or how we plan for residences in relation to work space, will be unique to our era. Balancing all our needs, unique and continuous, will yield a park model appropriate for us and us only. □

Further Reading

- Thomas Bender. *Toward an Urban Vision: Ideas and Institutions in Nineteenth-Century America*. Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1975.
- G. F. Chadwick. *The Park and the Town*. New York: Praeger, 1966.
- Galen Cranz. "Urban Parks as a Mechanism of Social Control." Working Paper No. 6, Dept. of Architecture, University of California, Berkeley, 1975.
- W. Creese. *The Search for Environment*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966.
- Richard Dattner. *Design for Play*. New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1969.
- Albert Fein. "The American City: The Ideal and the Real." In *In the Rise of an American Architecture*, edited by H. Hitchcock et al. New York: Praeger, 1970.
- N. T. Newton. *Design on the Land*. Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University, 1971.
- W. N. Seymour, Jr., ed. *Small Urban Spaces: The Philosophy, Design, Politics of Vest Pocket Parks and Other Small Urban Open Spaces*. New York: New York University Press, 1969.
- Christopher Tunnard and Henry H. Reed. *American Skyline*. New York: Mentor, 1956.
- Ben Whitaker and Kenneth Browne. *Parks for People*. New York: Schocken Books, 1971.
- Raymond Williams. *The Country and the City*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1973.

Subscriber information

Subscriptions:	1 Year	2 Years
Individuals		
Within U.S.	\$ 9.00	\$16.00
Outside U.S.	\$10.00	\$18.00
All Institutions	\$12.00	\$22.00

Address: LANDSCAPE
P.O. Box 7107
Berkeley, California 94707

Back Issues. Most back issues are available from Volume 12 on at \$3.00 per copy and for the current volume \$4.00 per copy, including shipping cost. Write LANDSCAPE for information.

Individual out-of-print issues may be purchased in facsimile form from Xerox University Microfilms, 300 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48106. Facsimile edition sets are also available for Volumes 1 through 10 from the Johnson Reprint Corporation, 111 Fifth Avenue, New York, New York 10003.

Microfilms: Xerox University Microfilms, 300 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48106 has a microfilm edition of all back issues.

Manuscripts: We welcome inquiries and the submission of appropriate non-technical manuscripts, with black-and-white illustrations if available. Manuscripts should be typed, double spaced, and accompanied by a brief biographical note and a short list of additional reading.

Send to: Editor, LANDSCAPE
P.O. Box 7107
Berkeley, California 94707

Landscape Staff

Editor Blair Boyd
Managing Editor Barbara Wilms
Associate Editor Roland F. Dickey
Circulation Manager Peg Dickey

Editorial Advisory Board

Roger Barnett
James H. Davis
Bonnie Loyd
Clare Cooper Marcus
Jean Vance



"Central Park." Print Archives, Museum of the City of New York.

Index to Volume 22

AUTHOR AND ARTICLE

- Barnett, Roger. "The Libertarian Suburb: Deliberate Disorder," 22:3.
Carlson, Alvar W. "Designating Historic Rural Areas: Northwestern Ohio Barns," 22:3.
Carruth, David B. "Assessing Scenic Quality: Transmission Line Siting," 22:1.
Cranz, Galen. "Changing Roles of Urban Parks: From Pleasure Garden to Open Space," 22:3.
Dovey, Kim. "Home: An Ordering Principle in Space," 22:2.
Erickson, Kenneth A. "Ceremonial Landscapes of the American West," 22:1.
Francaviglia, Richard V. "The Passing Mormon Village," 22:2.
Hall, Millicent. "The Park at the End of the Trolley," 22:1.
Luten, Daniel. "Greenhouse Effect," 22:1.
———. "The 160-Acre Limit," 22:2.
———. "How Big Is an Acre?" 22:3.
Marcus, Clare Cooper. "Remembrance of Landscapes Past," 22:3.
Matro, Thomas. "Poetry and the Effort of Perception," 22:2.
Raitz, Karl B. "The Barns of Barren County," 22:2.
———. "Pennyroyal Tobaccos," 22:2.
Rees, Ronald and Carl J. Tracie. "The Prairie House," 22:3.

- Stilgoe, John R. "Folklore and Graveyard Design," 22:3.
Sutton, Richard K. "Circles on the Plains: Center Pivot Irrigation," 22:1.
Vale, Thomas R. "The Sagebrush Landscape," 22:2.
Yip, Christopher L. "A Time for Bitter Strength: The Chinese in Locke, California," 22:2.
Zerner, Charles J. "The Street Hearth of Play: Children in the City," 22:1.

REVIEWER AND BOOK

- Barnett, Roger. *Toward an Urban Vision: Ideas and Institutions in Nineteenth-Century America*, by Thomas Bender, 22:2.
Dickey, Roland F. *The Papers of Frederick Law Olmsted, Vol. I: The Formative Years, 1822 to 1852*, ed. by Charles Capen McLaughlin and Charles E. Beveridge, 22:2.
Erickson, Kenneth A. *Man's Responsibility for Nature: Ecological Problems and Western Traditions*, by John Passmore, 22:3.
Stanislawski, Dan. *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience*, by Yi-Fu Tuan, 22:1.
Wagner, Philip. *This Scene of Man: The Role and Structure of the City in the Geography of Western Civilization*, by James E. Vance, Jr., 22:1.
Tuan, Yi-Fu. *The Country and the City*, by Raymond Williams, 22:3.

